

Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind

Policies and Procedures

Section: 1100

Subsection: Communications Policy

Revised November 2006

Reference: RID Code

Purpose: To establish guidelines for agency-wide communications and requesting use of interpreters at ISDB functions.

Policy:

Just as ISDB's service delivery model provides a continuum of services tailored to the individual needs of students (both Campus and Outreach), so to should our use of the various forms of communications used by the staff and students. Staff members should be engaged in training opportunities that enhance and expand their communication skills. Students should also participate in such training through their academic and social experiences.

Sign language classes and Braille instruction should be made available to all staff and student body members during each semester of the school year. Summer intensive courses should be made available as trained staff and funding permit. It will be the primary responsibility of the school Principal and Director of Curriculum to see that these courses of instruction are designed into the overall agency schedule/training program and student curriculum.

The Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind's (ISDB) philosophy is to provide a twenty-four (24) educational learning experience for all students. In an effort to promote respect towards all and to create an environment that allows equal access to communication, it is expected that all students and staff will use their best, most fluent form of communication in all public areas on campus and at ISDB sponsored activities (on and off campus). This may involve sign language and/or oral communications or any mix that is practical and appropriate for the event, audience and participants.

Given the complexity of the subject, and the need for enhancing overall communications in both written, oral and manual forms, ISDB has chosen Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE) as its "official" language. This does not preclude the use of any other form of sign language. However, given the need to coordinate the written and "spoken" word, and to enhance student understanding of the common language of the society that surrounds them, CASE should be the "language of choice" for instruction and official communications throughout the agency.

GUIDELINES:

When requesting interpreting/translating services:

Any individual may request interpreting or translation services through the Interpreting Services Coordinator. The request should include the following. (Use ISDB forms when needed.)

- Time and date(s) of events, including duration, if more than one interpreter is required.
- Context of the meeting/event, i.e., IEP, personal, workshop, etc.
- Provide printed information when relevant, ahead of time.

Communication Guidelines for Meetings:

- Introduce the interpreter at the beginning of each meeting and explain the role of the interpreter.

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- Facilitate correct utilization of an Interpreter, i.e., refrain from asking an interpreter to 'step out of his/her role' to participate in the meeting.
- Make sure the interpreter is correctly positioned to maximize communication during the meeting, i.e., ask the consumer(s) and interpreter to identify where they should be positioned in relation to one another.
- Only one person should speak at a time.

Definitions:

- **Public Areas** – hallways, cafeteria, cottage living areas, library, classrooms, computer lab(s), gymnasiums, offices, infirmary, buses/school vans, playgrounds, Tar Pit, etc.
- **Manual Communication** – using sign language to communicate with other individual(s).
- **Oral Communication** – using speech and or mouthing words (while signing or not) to another person. ISDB encourages all with the ability to speak and/or mouth words to use this medium to enhance communication interactions.
- **Interpreter(s)** – Those individuals who are employed to facilitate communication (expressive, receptive and/or translation, English and/or Spanish) through sign language, voice or any combination.
- **Translation** – The act of changing any spoken or print information format into another language form.

TOTAL COMMUNICATION DEFINED:

WHAT IS MEANT BY "TOTAL COMMUNICATION" (TC)?

TC is the title of a philosophy of communication, not a method. TC may involve one or several modes of communication (manual, oral, auditory, written), depending on the particular needs of the child. The original expectation of TC was for teachers to use the communication method(s) most appropriate for a child at a particular stage of development. Therefore, there would be situations when spoken communication would be appropriate, other situations where signing might be appropriate, others that call for written communication, and still others where **simultaneous communication** might work best.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES OF TC?

TC is meant to be the bridge that allows a crossover from an oral-only philosophy to a philosophy that embraces sign language, and vice verse.

WHO CAN USE THIS OPTION?

TC may be used by families and educators. Since over 90% of parents of children who are D/HH are hearing themselves, many believe that TC is a philosophy that will allow flexibility without eliminating options. By using a total approach of speaking and signing, all members of the family (the hearing and hearing impaired) have continuous access to the communication occurring in their environment. Teachers may choose to provide TC options in their classrooms, as long as they possess the necessary skills to meet all of the children's communication needs.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS OPTION?

The main benefit of TC is that it can open all avenues and modes of communication for the D/HH child. Parents and teachers might be reluctant to choose one mode of communication over another. Research studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of TC in other areas of a deaf child's development, such as psychosocial, linguistic, and academic. The primary benefit of TC is in allowing the child to choose the form that is best for him/her in any given situation.

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WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS?

One limitation is that TC may not be used with enough accurate focus in some situations. Many students who are deaf could be immersed in a form of simultaneous communication that does not match their level of language readiness or ability. In the classroom, TC often becomes a simultaneous practice of combining manual components (signs and fingerspelling) with spoken components used in English word order (CASE). Almost all TC education programs combine signing with speech. The very nature of the two modes (spoken and visual) may cause signers/speakers to alter their message to accommodate one or the other mode, compromising between the two methods. It may also be impossible for teachers to meet all the communication needs that might be present in a single classroom. Researchers do not always agree as to whether a manually coded English system leads to better reading and writing scores. What is clear, especially for very young D/HH children, is that the earlier the use of clear communication in any form that reaches the child is essential to enhancing the early stages of cognitive development.

WHAT ARE QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE CHOOSING THIS OPTION?

- Will children in a TC program be able to communicate with members of the Deaf Community?
- Can English be represented fully with sign language?
- If TC is chosen as an option, what kind of signing could be used?
- Can ASL be an option in a TC program?
- Can one talk and sign ASL at the same time without negatively affecting one or the other?

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Harvey W. Lyter III, Interim Superintendent